

Message Text

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42

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-10 ISO-00 OMB-01 SAM-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07 FAA-00 DOTE-00

OC-05 CCO-00 /099 W

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P R 191540Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4861

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION USUN NY

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

COMSIXTHFLT

FOSIF ROTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 2620

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR MMOL MOPS MR MO SS

SUBJECT: SAHARA WATCH: MAURITANIAN DEVELOPMENTS

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 2608

1. SECURITY MEASURES IN AND AROUND NOUAKCHOTT WERE INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY DURING NIGHT OF 18 DECEMBER. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN RECENT HISTORY POLICE ELEMENTS NORMALLY CHARGED WITH DIRECTING TRAFFIC AND CONTROLLING PEDESTRIANS WERE ARMED WITH RIFLES IN ADDITION TO THE USUAL PISTOLS. CURFEW AFFECTING
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AFRICANS IN GENERAL AND MAURITANIANS IN PARTICULAR CONTINUED

IN EFFECT, BUT MOVEMENT OF FOREIGN RESIDENTS TO NON-SENSITIVE AREAS REMAINED UNIMPAIRED. AIRPORT SECURITY WAS BEEFED UP CONSIDERABLY BY INTRODUCTION OF PLATOON OF GENDARMERIE NATIONALE TO SUPPORT USUAL CONTINGENT OF SURETE AND IMMIGRATION OFFICERS. NIGHT 18 DECEMBER GENDARMERIE WAS STOPPING VEHICLES APPROXIMATELY 100 METERS FROM AIRPORT TERMINAL. ALL NON-GOVERNMENTAL VEHICLES WERE REQUIRED TO PARK AT THIS SITE, REGARDLESS OF AMOUNT OF LUGGAGE INVOLVED. ONLY INDIVIDUALS PERMITTED BEYOND GENDARMERIE ROADBLOCK WERE THOSE WHO COULD DISPLAY CONFIRMED TICKET FOR UPCOMING FLIGHT.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL COMPLEXES, SUCH AS THE PRESIDENCY, CENTRAL BANK, ETAT MAJOR, AND THE HOSPITAL, ARE ALSO BEING AFFORDED INCREASED SECURITY. ALTHOUGH RUMORS PERSIST ON DIPLOMATIC CIRCUIT THAT HOSPITAL HAS BEEN CLOSED TO ALL BUT CASUALTIES FROM FIGHTING ON NORTHERN BORDER, EMBASSY HAS CONFIRMED THAT MOST SERIOUSLY ILL PATIENTS REMAIN IN HOSPITAL. GOVERNMENT HAS ISSUED INSTRUCTIONS THAT WOUNDED COMBATTANTS WILL RECEIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION AND SPACE, AND NUMEROUS MODERATELY ILL PATIENTS HAVE BEEN FORCED TO YIELD THEIR BEDS TO "WAR" CASUALTIES. HOSPITAL CONTINUES OVERBURDENED BUT FUNCTIONING.

3. ONE OF TWO IMMENSE COMPLEXES OF TENTS HOUSING ROUGHLY 40,000 PEOPLE (MOSTLY BLACKS) WAS PALPABLY TENSE NIGHT 18 DECEMBER. EMBOFF OBSERVED ROADBLOCK CONSISTNG OF 10-12 SOLDIERS, MOSTLY MOORS, ON THE PRINCIPAL ROUTE FROM NOUAKCHOTT BLOCKING VEHICULAR ENTRY TO FIFTH ARRONDISSEMENT. INSIDE TENT CITY, POPULATION WAS BUZZING OVER INCIDENT WHICH RESULTED FROM CARELESS ACCOUNTABILITY OF NEWLY ISSUED WEAPONS. AN AGING BLACK HAD APPARENTLY ACQUIRED A RIFLE LEFT BEHIND BY A SOLDIER, AND HAD INNOCENTLY BEGUN INSPECTING THE WEAPON. BEFORE BEING TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY THE POLICE, HE HAD WOUNDED TWO BLACK MAURITANIANS AND KILLED A MOOR. HE REMAINS IN POLICE CUSTODY, AND THE INCIDENT REMAINS THE TALK OF TENT CITY.

4. EMBASSY CONTINUES TO RECEIVE REPORTS OF SPORADIC FIGHTING ON THE MAURITANIAN/SAHARAN BORDER. ABOUT TEN LARGE MILITARY TRANSPORT VEHICLES WERE OBSERVED DEPARTING ETAT MAJOR NIGHT 18 AND MORNING 19 DECEMBER, PRESUMABLY EN ROUTE TO
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NORTHERN BORDER AREA. THESE VEHICLES WERE CLEARLY BEING UTILIZED FOR SHIPMENT OF MATERIALS RATHER THAN PERSONNEL. AS OF MORNING 19 DECEMBER, EMBASSY HAS NOT RECEIVED ANY REPORTS INDICATING MAURITANIANS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY ROUTED POLISARIO FROM LA GUERA. HANDYSIDE

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